

**what's a boy in
love supposed to
do?**

eddiespaghetti (foxwatson)

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Summary:

Everyone knew that you got your soulmate timer the day you turned 17. It would count down until you met your soulmate - that was, unless you'd already met them, or you wouldn't meet them. Whether your soulmate was dead or untrackable or you just already knew them, you were sort of fucked either way.

So, of course, as is on par for his life, Eddie wakes up on his seventeenth birthday with a zeroed out timer.

what's a boy in love supposed to do?

Author's Note:

okay so i write soulmate aus for like every fandom i ever pop up in and here is no exception i'm klajsdf like horribly addicted to them. the title is from erasure's oh l'amour which i listened to while writing this and which is ALSO on eddie's incredibly gay and incredibly good official spotify playlist. hope you guys enjoy the fic!!!

Everyone knew that you got your soulmate timer the day you turned 17. It would count down until you met your soulmate - that was, unless you'd already met them, or you wouldn't meet them. Whether your soulmate was dead or untrackable or you just already knew them, you were sort of fucked either way.

So, of course, as is on par for his life, Eddie wakes up on his seventeenth birthday with a zeroed out timer.

It doesn't feel great - but he'd feel worse if everyone in the Loser's Club wasn't zeroed out, too. Eddie was the next to last of them to turn 17, and the only person so far whose timer hadn't zeroed out was Stan's. Whoever his soulmate was, Stan was yet to meet them. He had a few years - he'd probably meet them at college. The rest of them? Apparently already matched to someone in their hellhole of a town.

His mother is the first one to ask him about it. Of course she is.

"Eddie-bear, what's your timer say?"

"It's already timed out, mom."

"Oh." Apparently this isn't what his mother was expecting. Still, she smiles, and it's something twisted with delight. Eddie feels a little sick just to look at her. "Well that's all the better, dear, you don't need any pesky soulmate. There's nobody good enough for you anyways."

"I'll see you after school, mommy," he says quickly, and he leaves as soon as he can, even as she says something after him. He doesn't care what it was, it doesn't matter. He doesn't have any use for anything she has to say ever since he found out about his medications. He's been planning for ages to go to college as far away as he can and to leave her in Derry - anyways. He has a soulmate. He must. It's just someone he's already met. That's all.

Maybe it's stupid, but Eddie really believes in soulmates. There's something romantic about it. It's in every movie, in every book, and he wants to have something like that. Someone who's always there for him when he has a bad day. Someone who's a perfect fit.

The problem, of course, is that now that Eddie has proof that he's already met him, Eddie has a pretty good idea that it's probably one of the other losers, if it's anyone - and he sort of has his heart set on one someone in particular. Not that he'd ever admit that out loud, or even really to himself, not on most days.

When he gets to school, everyone's waiting by the bike rack to see. He greets them by holding up his wrist with his eyebrows raised, his lips pressed into a thin line.

"Yeah! Eds joins the club!" Richie cries out, pulling him over with an arm around his shoulders.

On any other day Eddie would shove him away, but he just smacks half-heartedly at Richie's arm and then sighs. "Yeah, it's one big party. Just the whole lot of us without a clue who our soulmate is, no big deal," Eddie says.

Richie's arm tightens around his shoulders a little, and Bill comes over and pats him on the shoulder.

"It's a-a-alright, Eddie. We'll figure it out."

Bill's nice. Eddie might have sort of liked him, once. But Eddie's seen the way he looks at Bev, and the way Ben looks at Bev even though he doesn't know if his timer is zeroed yet or not, and the way Bev looks at Bill but isn't sure, because of Ben, and he doesn't want to get involved in any of that.

He's seen the way Mike looks at Bill, too. That's the sort of thing he can sympathize with. He can only hope they can all get it worked out.

"Thanks, Bill," Eddie says quietly. He leans a little more against Richie, because he can, because Richie's still there.

With Stan having a timer, with Mike and Bill and Bev and Ben all tangled, he and Richie are really the only ones left. It would make sense. It would make perfect sense to Eddie. He just isn't sure that Richie sees it that way - he doesn't know that he can be sure.

They all walk into school, and Richie doesn't let go of him til they're right to the door - but then he does. Of course he does.

Richie's dated a lot of people - well. He's kissed or at least flirted with anyone in school who's zeroed out. He's set on trying it out with everyone but the other losers, just to make sure. It's not that it's an illogical system, or that Eddie can fault him for it - but Eddie knows he could never do anything like that.

"C'mon, Eddie Spaghetti, lighten up."

"Don't call me that, dipshit."

"Shouldn't you be a little nicer on your birthday? Where's my normal bright and happy little Eds?"

"Literally right here, about to shove you into a trashcan. When has anyone ever described me as bright and happy?"

"Well, you brighten up my life."

Richie winks at him, and Eddie fights a wince. Richie flirts with everyone. He's flirted with Eddie before. Still, Eddie's worst nightmare is that Richie will decide to try and test things out with him now that it turns out Eddie's zeroed out, too. That's not how Eddie wants this. He wants to be sure. He wants his soulmate to know, too.

"Eds. Hey. I mean it, you seem a little off. You sure you're alright?"

There's the Richie that Eddie knows best. The stupid jokes and the bullshit, that's all a part of him, too, but he only ever gets serious like that with the losers, and only when it really matters. Eddie finally sighs, and smiles at him. "Yeah, Rich. I'll be okay. I just... I don't know. My mom asked about it this morning, said some stupid shit about how I don't need a soulmate, it just. I know I don't need one. But I still want one. You know?"

He leaves off just how eerily possessive his mother's words had been, how Eddie's constantly terrified she'll find some way to keep him in Derry. He doesn't want to get that serious with Richie this early in the day.

"I know. Come on, you'll find yours. If anyone deserves a soulmate, Eds, it's you. But let's get to class - I know you hate being late."

It's so sweet, the way Richie always pays that extra bit of attention, the way he knows what really bothers Eddie and what Eddie only pretends to be bothered by. Eddie only pretends to be upset when they skip class for something more fun, but if they're going to class, being late draws attention that Eddie could do without.

"Or," Richie says, drawing Eddie from his thoughts. "We could just fucking skip out on all this. It's your birthday, you know. We're going to Bill's tonight for your party, but. You shouldn't have to go to class unless you want to."

Eddie bites his lip, but it can't hide his grin. The last thing he wants right now is to go see everyone in school and have to deal with them all day, to have to deal with people finding out he's zeroed out. He can do all that some other day. "Yeah. Let's do it. You wanna get everyone else?"

"No, come on. Let's go, just us. I've got an idea."

Richie grabs Eddie's hand, and Eddie follows him gladly. There's really no other way he'd want to spend the day than with Richie, doing whatever crazy shit Richie is going to suggest.

They get back to the bike racks and leave as quick as they can, before someone really notices they were there in the first place. Eddie's

following Richie, still, since he's supposedly the one with the idea.

Surprisingly, they just end up at the quarry. Eddie's not really upset - it is a nice day, and it's always pretty at the quarry. It's a nice place to talk. Eddie had just had visions of the two of them sneaking into movies at the Capitol, Richie leaning over to whisper comments in his ear, both of them laughing until someone tried to shush them.

Maybe Richie would have kissed him, in the dark of the theater, and Eddie would have let him, even though he was nervous about Richie and what he meant by all this.

"Why the quarry?" Eddie asks, sitting down on the rocks.

Richie shrugs. "Just sort of thought it'd be nice to sit out here and talk for a while. Just us. Is that okay?"

Eddie's heart picks up. "Yeah. Sure."

Richie sits down next to him, and they're not quite touching, but when Eddie shifts, their knees brush, and all the hair on Eddie's legs stands up.

"Rich. Do you ever... Do you ever think about who your soulmate might be actually?"

"Why wonder when I know?"

Eddie freezes, and glances over at him. "Wh- What?"

"Well it's your mom, obviously."

He should have known. Eddie shoves Richie so hard he falls onto his side, and Richie's just laughing the whole time, while Eddie sighs and rolls his eyes. "You're such a fucking idiot, I don't know why I asked. You're so fucking - Ugh."

When's he's done laughing, Richie sits back up, grinning, and shrugs. "Too easy. You set me up, Eds. But uh. No, I don't know. Probably nobody, right? Have to be some asshole with some real shit luck to get me for a soulmate."

“What the hell does that mean?”

“Well. Come on.”

Eddie turns to him, arms crossed, and glares. “You come on, what the hell do you mean? That’s like the dumbest thing you’ve ever said - which really, is saying a lot.”

“Fuck, Eds, come on. Everyone knows what an annoying asshole I am. I just like fool around with people because I’m pretty sure no one wants to get stuck with me.”

“I... You are so fucking stupid. Stop saying shit like that. You’re... Rich you’re. Great. You’re amazing. If anybody doesn’t want you as a soulmate they’re just an idiot, they should work on their own expectations or something. There’s nothing wrong with you. Except you’re an idiot. But comparatively, that’s like. Nothing.” Eddie pauses, and glances over, and Richie’s not saying anything, so Eddie blurts out something else. “Who do you think my soulmate is? Do you have any ideas?”

“Oh, I, uh. I was thinking maybe someone else at school? There’s plenty of girls around school that aren’t Greta Keene, you know.”

“Girls? Why’d you think it’s a girl?”

“Well I mean most people are... like that, right? Like most of the soulmate pairs in town, it’s a man and a woman.”

Richie’s right, really. Eddie flushes. “But other kinds exist. There’s movies and stuff. It’s still like. The same. Your soulmate’s your soulmate. We just live in a small place.”

“Yeah, I guess.”

“I didn’t know you were so... I didn’t know you thought like this, Rich.”

Richie shrugs again. “I guess just. Seeing my parents has kind of left me not caring about it much. Whole thing sort of seems like bullshit to me. Especially with most of us having zeroed out timers anyways, like. What the fuck does it matter?”

Eddie wants to try and explain to Richie, or to help him, even a little, but he also sort of feels like he's going to be sick. He stands up. "I'm uh." He can't go home or his mom will see him and think he's sick, and he'll never get to leave again. But he can't keep talking to Richie like this. "Let's. Let's go to the Capitol."

There's a moment of quiet, but then Richie nods. They bike over to the Capitol, and they buy tickets for the next showing of some horror movie.

Richie doesn't try to talk to him at all in the theater. Eddie isn't sure if it's a blessing or a curse - but he does know he feels even worse. He runs to the bathroom before the movie is halfway through, and sits in a stall hyperventilating and trying not to cry. His chest hurts and his hands shake and it feels, really, like there's a hollow place inside him that didn't used to be there. Like even just the hope of Richie was enough to fill it, and now that hope is gone, and somehow Richie's gone, even though he's just in the other room.

He's tempted to leave and ditch Richie entirely. Instead, once he's pulled himself together, he goes back in.

Finally, Richie leans over and asks, "Are you okay?"

"...Not exactly, Rich."

"...Come on." Richie pulls him out of the theater while the movie's still going, and they go out to the alleyway by the theater.

It's nice that he's concerned, but it's also awful. Eddie just stands there, with his arms crossed. "I don't really wanna talk about it."

"I don't think you really wanted to keep trying to pay attention to a movie either."

"Well. No. No, I guess not." Then, Richie's paying attention just makes him angry all over again. "Look, I'm just gonna. There's stuff I wanna do before my party tonight. Let's just meet up at Bill's again later, okay? I'll. I'll see you there."

Only Eddie suddenly realizes he doesn't wanna go to his party, either. Richie agrees quietly, though, and leaves, on his bike, and Eddie rides

off to the barrens on his own.

It's not like Eddie could ever be sure - it's not like he can now with his timer - but he'd honestly thought for a long time that Richie could be his soulmate. They just... fit. Just the way they were supposed to. It's getting pretty obvious now, though, that Richie doesn't feel that way. There's not really anything that Eddie can do about it. If Richie were his soulmate, wouldn't he get it? Isn't that what it means?

Eddie rides his bike to the barrens and spends a while sitting by the creek, tossing in rocks. The rocks by the water are too big and misshapen to skim, so they just sink directly to the bottom of the shallow stream. He checks his watch a few times, waits until his mom will be gone for her bridge night with her friends, then bikes back to his house and goes up to his room.

He puts on a mixtape - one that he made for himself, not one that Richie made him for a birthday or a holiday - and lays on his bed listening to music. Maybe the music hits a little close to home, still, but it seems like Eddie's birthday is officially a lost cause, so he may as well just lie on his bed and listen to songs about having his heart broken.

He knows that when he doesn't show up for the party, they'll try to find him - someone will. He just hopes that maybe they won't send Richie, and someone else will come instead. Maybe Bev, or Bill. That would be nice.

It's about a half hour after the party is supposed to start when someone rings the doorbell. He tries to ignore it, but they keep going, so eventually Eddie hauls himself off the bed, pauses his music, and goes to answer the door.

It's Richie. Because of course it is.

"You can just tell them I'm not coming. I feel like shit, I don't. I don't want to celebrate this, it's dumb. Just. Tell everyone I'm sorry or. Whatever."

He goes to close the door, but Richie holds it open. "At least just talk to me for a minute, Eds."

"I don't want to talk to you, Richie. Or anyone. Can you leave me alone, please? And don't call me that."

"Can you at least explain what happened? You were in such a good mood when I asked you to skip, it seemed like you were over the whole... Timer thing."

"I'm not upset about the timer thing."

"Then what are you upset about?"

It's the last straw. Eddie lets go of the door. "What am I upset about? You- I show up to school with a zeroed timer and you... You pull me in, you tell me welcome to the club, you tell me it'll be okay. Then, after all that, after all the things I know, you ask me to skip class and you tell me specifically you want it to be just us, but then you just. You just take me to the quarry, where it's gorgeous and romantic, so you can tell me you don't even think you *have* a soulmate. You've tried it out with every fucking person in the school with a zeroed timer, I know you wanted to see, see if it was any of them, and it wasn't. I know you well enough to know you were looking, Rich, but I. I don't even get that? Me, I don't even register as an option, you just. You yank me out of class to do all that and I. On today, of all days, when I... And then we went to the theater like I thought we would and you didn't even make a single stupid joke and everything was terrible and it was the worst fucking birthday I think I've ever had, so please just. Leave me alone, Richie."

Richie's quiet and wide-eyed when Eddie closes the door on him. He locks it, too, for good measure, and runs back up to his room before he starts to lose it.

He thought maybe he'd hear pounding on the door or noises at his window again - instead there's just quiet. Like Richie just walked away and left.

Maybe Eddie's finally ruined things. Maybe all the other losers will be through with him, too, once Richie tells them what he said and did. At least for the moment, he's too numb to care.

After a while, the phone rings. Dazed and out of it from just lying on

his bed for so long, Eddie goes over and picks it up.

“Hello?”

“Eddie? What happened? You sound awful.”

It's Bev. The one person Eddie thinks he could actually talk to right now. He sags a little with relief. “Sorry. Just. I'm not feeling very well.”

“Oh. Well I guess that explains why you didn't come. Just - we sent Richie to go check on you and he never came back. He's not still with you, is he?”

Shit. “No. He. I told him I wasn't coming and he left, I thought he'd go back and tell you guys. I'll go and look for him. I'm sorry.”

“Eddie, no, you sound awful. We can find him.”

“I've just...” He pauses. But then again, it's Bev. If anyone would still be able to forgive him, he hopes it'd be her. “I've just been crying, that's all. I'm not actually sick. Sorry.”

“Crying? Eddie what happened?”

“Just. Stuff with Richie. We skipped today, you know, and he. He said some stuff and I got upset. I came home and then he showed up, and I. I mean I yelled at him a little, but there's no reason he should... Maybe you should go look for him. I don't know.”

“Eddie, really. You can tell me. I won't tell everyone else unless you want me to.”

“...Richie says he doesn't have a soulmate. He. I don't know, he told me that out at the quarry while we were skipping. It wasn't really... How I thought things would go. It was stupid. I was being stupid. I shouldn't have gotten upset with him. I'll go find him.”

He hears a sigh on the other end of the phone, then some muttering. “Sorry, I was just telling everyone you'll go look for him. Just. Make sure he's okay, will you? And I'm sorry he said that, that's - I'm sorry about your birthday, Eddie.”

“It’s okay. I’ve. Well. I’m sure I’ll have worse. Someday.”

He hangs up before Bev can try and say anything else encouraging to him. He knows he looks like a mess, but he can’t really bring himself to care. He just puts on a light jacket and grabs his bike, then heads over to Richie’s house.

Richie isn’t there, of course, and he isn’t at the arcade. Eddie checks a few places before he finally finds Richie’s bike by the quarry.

He goes in and finds Richie sitting on the rocks, where they’d been just earlier today.

“Hey, idiot. Everyone’s worried about you.”

Richie turns around, and he looks like a mess, too. Eddie bites his lip, but stays where he is.

“Who - the other losers?”

“They called. After you left. Bev did, but everyone else was with her. I told them I’d come look for you.”

“...Why?”

“Because I... I’m sorry. I... I shouldn’t have. Said all that stuff. It’s not your fault that I - That you’re... It’s not your fault. So I shouldn’t have snapped at you. I mean why would you... You should just go back and hang out with everyone else, they were missing you.”

Richie stands up, and looks at him. “What about you?”

“I don’t want to see everyone like this. Bev already knows I was... Upset. She promised she wouldn’t tell anyone. So.”

“So you’re just gonna go home?”

“Yeah. I think today’s just sort of a wash. It’s fine. Like I told Bev, I’m sure I’ll have worse birthdays.”

“...I didn’t mean to ruin your birthday, Eds.”

Eddie shrugs, but he can't keep looking at Richie, so he looks at the ground. "I ruined my own birthday. I shouldn't have... thought stuff. That's not your fault."

"I think it might be a little bit my fault."

Eddie looks up at that, frowning. "How is that your fault?"

"I. Cause I think maybe I'm an idiot, Eds."

"Yeah, well we knew that already. What are you talking about?"

Richie walks a little closer, and pushes up his glasses. Eddie can see that his eyes are red, too, which is stupid. "Do you... Do you really think I'm your soulmate?"

It feels like there's a knife twisting in his stomach. Eddie winces, and looks down again. "I was being stupid. Just. Let's just ignore all of that stuff that I said, and maybe we can just. Go back to normal."

"Eds. Why'd you think I was your soulmate?"

"Well because it's. It made sense, didn't it?" He looks up, a little desperate, his eyes a little too wide, and he can feel the prickle of tears again, but he just keeps blinking them back. "All of us are timed out except Stan, and maybe Ben, but he may as well be, and he and Bill and Mike and Bev are all. The way they are, you know, and so there was just us left, and we're. It makes more sense for all of us losers to be each others than for it to just be some random person at school, and just the way that we. We sort of. Fit. I thought."

The thought is past tense on purpose. Now all he can feel are the jagged edges that he thought matched neatly with Richie's that now suddenly don't seem to belong anywhere - he's just all fucked up all by himself, and he'll probably end up forced to stay in Derry, taking care of his mother while Richie goes off to seek his nonexistent soulmate or whatever.

"Richie. Can you please let me go home? I'm not. I can't. Do this."

Only then Richie comes over and pulls him into a hug, arms wrapped tight around his shoulders, and it feels just as right as it ever did.

Eddie leans against him, melts, really, and starts to cry again.

"I'm sorry, Eddie, God, I didn't. I'm such a fucking idiot, I'm so sorry."

He grips onto Richie's shirt so he can't pull away, and then he realizes Richie's not even wearing a jacket. "Oh my god, dumbass, it got cold while you were sitting out here, didn't it? Here, take my jacket."

Eddie pulls back and unzips his hoodie, offers it to Richie, who pulls it on slowly. The sleeves are a little short, but it works well enough and Richie gives Eddie an almost smile. Eddie almost manages to smile back at him.

"Eds. I'm... I think you're right."

That's not what Eddie was expecting. He blinks. "You. About what?"

"I just. I tried all those other people because I never thought it'd be you - I thought you'd have a timer. And then when it sunk in, I still really thought that you'd never. I thought you should probably have someone different, right? But everyone at school is fucking awful, you were right, and even just thinking of you having to date one of them, I. I don't know why I said all that stuff, it was so fucking stupid. And I still don't know why you'd - I don't know why you'd get stuck with me. But if all this stuff is real, you. You're definitely mine. And it took today and all of this shit for me to really think about how well we do fit, and how right you are, and I'm sorry for that."

"What are you saying?" Eddie asks quietly.

"I'm saying that. I think you're probably my soulmate. If I have a soulmate. I think if soulmates exist, then this is what it's like. Right? Not. Not today, but. The rest of the time. With you." Richie pauses. "I fucking love you. Is what I'm saying."

"Richie." Eddie just stands there, and looks at him. It hardly feels real, after the day he's had. "Are you... are you sure?"

"Yeah. Yeah, I'm sure. I'm sorry I wasn't sure earlier. I'm sorry I'm such a dumbass."

“Well I. I think I can accept that apology. On one condition.”

The quarry’s still gorgeous at night. The moon’s reflected in the water, and the sky is clear so everything just glows, and they can see all the stars from where they’re standing.

“What’s the condition?” Richie asks.

“Kiss me?”

He watches Richie blush, then smile. Neither of them try to say anything else, they just come together again, pulling each other close, and then Richie tilts his head and leans in and they’re kissing.

Richie actually knows what he’s doing, so Eddie lets him take most of the lead at first, but he picks it up quickly enough and licks into Richie’s mouth, their tongues brushing against each other, the feeling of it making Eddie shiver.

They kiss and kiss until Eddie’s lips feel tender, and then he pulls back and rests his head against Richie’s chest. “I love you. I’m still sorry about the stuff I said.”

“I’m sorry, too. Do you think we could have a redo tomorrow? Just. Of your birthday. You and me, out on the town, party at Bill’s afterwards with everyone else. I’ll take you to the movies and actually make it fun this time?”

“Yeah, alright.” Eddie runs his hands up and down Richie’s waist, feels the fabric of his own jacket under his hands and smiles. “Soulmates,” he mutters against the fabric at Richie’s shoulder.

“Soulmates.” Richie echoes, but firmly, like he agrees.

Eddie finally pulls back to look up at him. Richie’s lips are a little swollen, but his eyes aren’t red anymore, and he’s smiling down at Eddie. His eyes are bright. He looks like himself again. That hollow, sinking feeling in Eddie’s chest is completely gone. “Come on, let’s go back to my place. My mom is still out and you can come up to my room.”

“Oh Eds, how forward.”

"You're such a jackass, I don't know why I love you so much." Eddie tries to make the words have their usual bite, but he's smiling, and he knows he sounds as infinitely fond as he really is. He's yanking Richie along by the hand, and when he looks Richie's smiling back at him.

"Yeah, but you do."

"Yeah, I do. You're lucky you're so cute."

Richie blushes, and Eddie's pretty proud of himself. They go back to Eddie's and Richie puts his bike behind the house, where Eddie's mom won't see when she comes home. They go up to his room, and Eddie changes out his sad mixtape for a better one before he locks the door and lays down.

Richie's already on the bed, and he's taken Eddie's jacket off. He reaches out, and Eddie slides into his arms, curling up against him, wrapping one of his legs around one of Richie's.

"I love you," he says quietly.

"I love you, too, Eds," Richie replies.

Tomorrow they'll go to the movies and maybe back to the quarry, they'll joke and bicker and kiss and maybe go swimming, and it'll probably be the best day after his birthday that Eddie will ever have. They'll go to Bill's and exchange gifts and they'll tell everyone - but for now they can just sleep, and Eddie can finally be sure - and he can know that Richie's sure, too.

Author's Note:

i literally had my best friend read this to make sure it wasn't too sad to post kljasdf so i hope he was right!! anyways i have another soulmate au fic i'm gonna post probably later this week?? because i wasn't kidding I Have A Problem so i went to write one and ended up writing two lkasjdf so if you like soulmate aus as much as i do you can look forward to that and if not lkajsdf Sorry!! i have other fics i'm gonna keep working on this week and hopefully some of those

will be ready to post or to start posting soon!!